



Barry Strauss

Loving War Speaker Series

Barry Strauss
Cornell



"The Joy of Sacks: A New Theory of Homeric Warfare"

Wednesday, May 18, 2005
12:15 p.m.

Mershon Center for International Security Studies
1501 Neil Avenue
Room 120

This event will be webcast [here](#).

Lunch will be served to those who RSVP to [Viki Jones](#) no later than Friday, May 13, 2005.

Our usual image of Homeric warriors is of men who loved the battlefield but we overlook the big role played in Homeric warfare by sacking cities for fun and profit. The first warriors of the western tradition were less soldiers and more pirates than we generally care to admit. Chivalry and battle-lust are elements in Homer but so are greed and the glory brought by material goods. And Homeric warriors thought nothing of making war on unarmed civilian cattle-herders while treating women as so much war loot. If we are all Greeks then we may all be more Vikings than we care to admit.

Dr. Barry Strauss is professor of History and Director of the Peace Studies Program at Cornell. He has authored numerous publications and books, including *Salamis: The Naval Battle That Saved Ancient Greece – and Western Civilization* (2004), *Western Civilization: The Continuing Experiment*, co-author (2004), and *War and Democracy: A Comparative Study of the Korean War and the Peloponnesian War*, co-edited with David McCann. (2001).

This talk is part of a quarter-long series arranged by Geoffrey Parker around the theme of "*Loving War*," and is offered as a graduate seminar (HST 767). The syllabus, including each speaker's recommended readings, is available [here](#).

About the Series:

Many cultures today and in the past see war as good and so build up cadres of killers that threaten the security and stability of their neighbors. This asymmetry raises many issues:

- How are such cadres of killers found and trained; what motivates them; to what extent do they draw on tradition and to what extent do they forge their own? That is: do they kill because that is what their culture expects or because it works?
- Do cultures that embrace war as good have any distinctive characteristics?
- To what extent is a warrior culture natural or universal? To what extent do individual societies promote, shape, control and suppress the instinct to "love war"?
- What connects and what divides the warrior's understanding of fighting as a heroic individual pursuit and the state's conception of war as protective public policy?

- Do all societies understand, observe and enforce that distinction? If not, is the distinction a hallmark of "civilization" or "modernity"?
- What happens when this distinction is not honored?
- Above all, do the killers "just do it" or do they actually enjoy killing?

Upcoming Events:

April 6, 2005: [Nicola DiCosmo](#)
April 13, 2005: [Karl Friday](#)
April 20, 2005: [Thomas Kuehne](#)
April 27, 2005: [Robert H. Pape](#)
May 4: [Elliot Cohen](#)
May 11: [Peter A. Fritzsche](#)
May 18, 2005: Barry Strauss
May 25, 2005: [N.A.M. Rodger](#)